

VILA RECÔNCAVO

[Town Life]

743 so there is competent medical assistance. Those who are too poor to pay receive free aid and medications, milk, and soup; those who can pay do so, paying only the wholesale prices of the articles. The institute is well equipped, with an x-ray machine, diathermy, and other heat appliances, which are popular because of the prevalence of colds and rheumatism.

743 The institute also operates the weekly motion picture which
 • 529 has been a great boon to the town, a recreation room, centrally
 [546] located in the town, which has a radio, billiard tables, and a bar selling milk shakes, sandwiches, beer, and soft drinks. This place has become the major meeting place for the men and boys of the town. In addition to this, the institute also runs a night school for adults.

743 Group 2, as listed at the beginning of this chapter, consists mainly of the people who work for those in Group 1 and
 873 who are attached to them by the bonds of the patronship to some extent, as well as by salary. The majority of persons
 463 in this category are women, engaged in the traditional female pursuits of washing, ironing, sewing, embroidering, and general housework.

296 As a rule the laundry is washed at one of the town wells, which are encased in cement. The women carry the dirty
 462 clothes, a bucket, and wooden basin, all piled on top of their
 463 heads, to the well. They pull up enough water in their buckets to fill the basins in which the clothes are washed. After
 [482] a soaking and scrubbing with soap the wet, soapy clothes are spread out on the ground in the sun, and from time to time water is sprinkled on them to aid the sun in bleaching. Then the clothes are rewashed and spread out to dry. Depending upon the weather, the washing and drying process may take from a whole day to three or four days before the clothes are considered clean enough. Then they are taken home to be
 [463] ironed. The older pattern demanded that a different person do the ironing, but today this pattern is breaking down and frequently the same person washes and irons. The irons used are the old-fashioned kind heated by charcoal, which is placed inside and ignited. The irons are made with drafts to keep the fire going, and the women must stop frequently to fan the fire or renew the charcoal. Often a busy woman has two irons going and sets one aside to heat while she irons with the other.

462 Many women also prepare xangô, a small sardinellike fish
 252 caught in great quantities by the fishermen of Vila Recôncavo
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usinas, the mill hands and even the field hands are modern industrial workers. They are employees of a large industrial corporation and are protected at least theoretically by the labour laws of the nation. The highly personalized relationship between the plantation workers and the owner-administrator of his own plantation, which persisted from the slave era, has been replaced on the larger *usinas* by the impersonal employee-employer relationship of the modern industrial age. Today, modern plantations and small towns have electricity; there is modern housing for workmen; the State and even the sugar companies provide medical aid; there are primary schools both in the small towns and on many plantations; recreation facilities are found in the towns and provided by the *usinas*; and the sugar-cane experimental station situated in the area constantly urges fertilization of the land and modern techniques and methods of sugar-cane production. But the older and more traditional patterns exist side by side with the new, and each of them influences the relations among the racial groups of the zone.

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III. Vila Recôncavo is a small town on the Bay of All Saints. The rural area around it, which lies within the social and economic orbit of the town and which is the unit under consideration, comprises some 80 square kilometres, or slightly less than half the entire area of the county of which the town of Vila Recôncavo is the county seat.¹

It is this area there are 14 plantations, three of which nowadays plant very little sugar cane. Parts of the town itself are built on the land of one of these plantations, and the rest of the town area is owned in small lots by private individuals or by the Church. Although Vila Recôncavo is the county seat, local government is the only important function which it fulfils for the surrounding area. It is not used as a shipping point, either for receiving supplies from the outside or for sending sugar to the outside. *Brasos do mar*, or inlets of the bay, go to many of the plantations and are deep enough for the *sacoviras* (shallow draft sailboats) used on the bay for transport. Many of the plantations have direct connexion with Salvador. Commerce in Vila Recôncavo is almost entirely limited to supplying the 1,462 inhabitants of the town and of some small islands and of one community near by which is not devoted to sugar production. It is not the major supply source even for these groups which live near enough to another and far larger commercial centre where they prefer to do their marketing. The *prefeito* or mayor of the county is rarely a resident of the town itself. Rather he is usually a planter of the surrounding area. He goes into town to do municipal business,

¹ Both the town and the county bear the name of Vila Recôncavo.

planters. People in the upper class of the town, when they can, send their children to the capital to continue their education, and there are several *mestiço* students from Vila Recôncavo studying law, medicine and engineering in Salvador. The intelligence of the mulatto is traditional, and it has been equally traditional that the darker-skinned person is unintelligent. Today these traditions are not as strong as before, but still it is felt that the mulatto has somewhat more aptitude than the Negro. The old idea of the Negro, meant for work and to be servile, still exists, now tempered with the knowledge that education can change the situation. There is only one club in Vila Recôncavo—a football club—and the players are all shades, from white to black, and so are the spectators. They all sit or stand together under the shade of the one big tree which gives shade to the playing field. The field is on the property of a white man who, while he has nothing to do with the team, allows them to play there, put up goal posts and markers. The bar and recreation centre are open to all so long as they wear shoes—a ruling made to keep out the muddy feet of children who came straight from the beach to have a 'coke'. All the racial types and classes get together here to play pool and gossip, this being the one and only point of public social activity in the town. At the movies, the admission price is extremely low, the same for everyone, and all four classes attend. Negroes and whites of all classes sit next to each other. At church there are no special pews, the faithful usually gathering in the front and the less faithful hanging about near the back. The choir and the acolytes are from all classes and colours. At parties, which are few, colour lines are disregarded, *brancos* and *morenos* dance with *mulatos* and *pretos* just as long as both partners can *pular* (jump).

The social situation is gradually changing, and the extremely personal element is being lost. It is strongest on the private plantation, where the owner spends the greater part of the year, but at the *usina* much of the personal element is weakened because of the numbers of workers. Even at the *usina*, there is visiting and gossiping between the owners' families and the workers. But at the *usina* not all the workers accept their subservient position as do those of the plantations. This is specially true of the higher echelon of specialists and technicians of the mill, who will frequently not go to a party given by the owner, even though invited. It seems to be a way of saying that the company of the white owners is neither needed nor wanted. They prefer to keep their relations on a strictly business basis. At the *usina*, when a worker is sick, he goes to the medical post where he is treated by a paid nurse, rather than to the owner's house. On pay day, the *usina* worker is paid at the mill by a paymaster, not in the living room of the owner's house. Nevertheless, in spite of the industrialized aspect of the mill, the number of workers is not too large to exclude all personal contact with the owners, who adminis-

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The irregularities and inadequacies of electric service in the city are attributed by many inhabitants of Bahia to what they call the "contempt of the Americans for the well-being of the people," as if the Americans were the only ones responsible for the operation of the American-Brazilian enterprise that produces electricity for the region. Everything that is or is supposed to be American otherwise enjoys great prestige. There is, how-

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ever, a foreign group against which (or, more precisely, against the hidden "trust" that it represents) there exists a very strong hostility, although it manifests itself only on certain occasions.

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It is a matter of emigrants from Spanish Galicia, accused of exploiting the populace owing to the monopoly that they have acquired in the grocery and bakery business. At certain times when ten-

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sion is particularly strong, as in 1930, and following the rapid rise of the price of commodities of prime necessity at the beginning of the last world war, the populace gave free vent to its discontent by plundering certain Spanish business establishments.

But the attitude of the Bahians toward the person of these immigrants is free of lasting animosity, and marriages between the two

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groups are frequent. The fact remains, however, that the population attributes to the Spaniards the shortage of certain food commodities, especially bread, and it accuses these emigrants of "enriching themselves off of the misery of the people."

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The recreational associations of the English, Spaniards, Syrians, and Lebanese are frequented by Brazilians. Likewise the hospitals maintained by the Portuguese and Spanish colonies are managed by Brazilian doctors and receive numerous patients from Bahia, white or colored.

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The religion of the Catholic majority is traditionally much more external and ritualistic than dogmatic, the religiosity of a large number of those who call themselves "strict Catholics" being chiefly theoretical. This must have constituted a serious difficulty for the clergy; it is also a subject of astonishment for the visitor who imagines that he will come in contact with "the most

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Catholic of Brazilian cities." The antagonisms between religious groups are also moderate in this domain and /19/ never affect the